



JACOBSON, RUSSELL, SALTZ,
NASSIM & DE LA TORRE LLP

1880 Century Park East, Suite 900
Los Angeles, CA 90067
Telephone: (310) 446-9900
Facsimile: (310) 446-9909
www.jrsnd.com

September 6, 2019

VIA US MAIL & EMAIL TO:
lamagedit@lamag.com

Los Angeles Magazine, LLC
ATTN: Legal Department
5900 Wilshire Boulevard
Tenth Floor
Los Angeles CA 90036

RE : WHITE V. LOS ANGELES MAGAZINE, LLC ET. AL.
CASE NO. : TBD

To Whom it May Concern:

Be advised that this office represents Fern White ("Ms. White" or "Client"), who has been outrageously defamed in your article titled "Two Anti-Homeless Facebook Groups Count L.A. Cops Among Their Members" published by you on August 14, 2019.

Your article contains knowing falsehoods about Ms. White and otherwise maliciously portrays Ms. White in a false light by recklessly repeating and elaborating upon false and misleading publications from radical left-wing activists that published a political hit piece against two popular community groups founded by Ms. White. Such false and misleading publications were created in order to discredit said community groups' support for, and affiliation with, then City Council District 12 candidate John Lee ahead of City elections, in order to influence the outcome of said elections. Your magazine then, without any investigation or honest independent research, not only parroted these false and misleading statements from said radical activists, but you actually recklessly and maliciously added to them to make them libelous on their face.

Specifically, your article claims that Ms. White formed "two anti-homeless vigilante Facebook groups in the West San Fernando valley." Your article claims this to be current fact rather than opinion. This statement is so recklessly false and damaging that your publication of it can only be described as malicious.

To begin, your article bases its reporting of "fact" on the unverified and selective blogging by admitted radical left-wing activists – activists that have a lengthy history of attacking then Candidate John Lee – about extremely old postings in said groups, some of which have been doctored and/or photo-shopped. In fact, some of said posts are attributed to certain persons that have been removed from said groups or have been deceased for more than a year, and some posts actually have nothing to do with Ms. White's groups at all. Further, these very postings were part

of an older complaint from said activists that has long-since been investigated and addressed by the Los Angeles Police Department ("LAPD").

The truth is that Ms. White formed Crimebusters of West Hills and Woodland Hills ("Crimebusters") as a community group to offer the citizens of the West Valley a convenient place to discuss, report, and learn to prevent crime in order to help keep the neighborhood in which she lives a safe place to raise children and for local businesses to thrive. The group grew to over 11,000 members of the community and developed a close working relationship with the LAPD so that the LAPD could better directly educate and address the concerns of the citizens it is charged to protect, and to otherwise receive reports and evidence of criminal activity in real time from actual witnesses willing to work with the Police to prosecute those perpetrating crime in the West Valley.

As a direct result of the Crimebusters Facebook page, the LAPD has been able to solve literally hundreds of crimes ranging in degree from trespassing and burglary to arson and assault with a deadly weapon.

Furthermore, Crimebusters is not an "anti-homeless" group. To the contrary, it is an anti-crime group. It is true that a large percentage of reported criminal activity occurring in the City of Los Angeles is related to the homeless population¹. This phenomenon likewise caused the Crimebusters page to be filled with citizen reports of illegal homeless encampments on public thoroughfares and in children's playgrounds that required the City of Los Angeles' attention due to a variety of factors, including but not limited to: the persistent and illegal accumulation of rotting trash, used hypodermic needles, and human waste. As such, Ms. White formed the Facebook community group "Homeless Transient Encampments of our West Valley" to document and report such illegal encampments that required the City's attention due to the fact that the City handled the "clean up" of such illegal encampments differently than other criminal activity, and in order to remove such reporting from the Crimebusters group to make sure that it could focus on the reporting of other criminal activity unrelated to such illegal encampments.

That said, it is equally true that some members of the current homeless population do engage in serious criminal activity in the West Valley.² Such criminal activity can and does get discussed and reported in both groups. However, reporting and discussing such serious and newsworthy criminal activity does not automatically transform the purpose of said groups into an official "anti-homeless" group. In fact, it is well documented and celebrated in both groups that their members have a long history of helping the homeless, providing aid to the homeless, assisting in bringing mental health services to the homeless, and helping the homeless obtain shelter so that they can get off the streets.

Had your magazine done even a fraction of actual research and investigation into the public postings of said groups, you would have seen that certain LAPD officers have reported in said

¹ See <https://abc7.com/society/rising-homeless-population-in-la-putting-strain-on-city-agencies/5288979/>

² see <https://www.nbctvlosangeles.com/news/local/Coffee-attack-at-Canoga-Park-Doughnut-Shop-502280761.html>

groups on their interactions with the homeless by explaining the backstory and plight of certain members of the homeless community, in order to humanize them to those members of the community that may have become jaded to their presence, obtain community donations for their specific needs, and provide access to the panoply of City services available to help get them off the streets or get the mental health help that they require. These are not the actions of a “vigilante group” that is “anti-homeless.” However, despite these facts being prevalent and publicly available, your magazine arrogantly failed to investigate and/or report such truths when you maliciously labeled the entirety of Ms. White’s groups as such in order to engage in yellow journalism and malign the LAPD as a whole for interacting with the community it is tasked to protect.

As such, Ms. White’s community groups are neither anti-homeless groups, nor are they vigilante groups – a moniker that otherwise labels said group an intolerant criminal enterprise. Although it may be true that said open community groups have been the victims of occasional inappropriate comments posted by internet trolls, activist plants, and otherwise disgruntled community members frustrated at the increase in crime in their neighborhoods, it is equally true that such comments are not tolerated and that such comments – and people making them – are removed from said groups as soon as they are discovered for violating their conspicuously published and repeated “No Vigilante” and “No Bullying” policies.



Your article recklessly ignores these facts. Instead, your article focuses on old and doctored screenshots of posts by people who were removed from the Crimebusters group, posts that were removed from the group, and posts from trolls and activists intent on creating their own evidence of wrongdoing for their own improper purposes. Instead, your article merely regurgitated the

falsehoods and misleading information that was published by these same radical activists for their own misguided purposes and have now stated as fact that Ms. White created and administers two vigilante hate groups that officially espouse and promote that criminal activity and violence be perpetrated on vulnerable members of society. This statement by your article is so outrageously and recklessly false that it constitutes actionable libel per se.

To make matters worse, your article then seeks to gain some credibility by publishing statements from the likes of Tom Booth, whom you admittedly describe as a "homeless advocate." However, your article fails to investigate exactly why Mr. Booth was removed from said groups, his potential involvement in the espousing of false information about said groups, or his personal animus toward both Ms. White and the LAPD that would cause him to be less than honest and/or misleading in his statements. Additionally, your article then states that an anonymous source claims "that area homeless individuals continue to be regularly harassed, even pelted with objects by people driving by," and that "at least one individual has been physically attacked by people witnesses told her are members of the groups." Thus, you reported as fact that some unidentified person heard that another unidentified person was attacked, and that another unidentified person said that the unidentified attackers unequivocally belonged to Ms. White's groups, all without making any attempt to verify the veracity of such incredulous claims. The reporting of such vitriolic nonsense without a single shred of corroborating evidence from an obviously biased source to support your yellow journalism is blatantly irresponsible and indisputably malicious.

Your magazine failed to perform the most preliminary of research and investigation into Ms. White and her community groups before you factually labeled them as criminal "vigilante" and "anti-homeless" groups. Further, by factually labeling Ms. White's groups falsely as a criminal vigilante hate group, you have irreparably impugned and damaged the reputation of Ms. White, and of the LAPD Senior Lead Officers that were tasked with working with said groups to improve community relations by liaising with a significantly large portion of the community through social media and to otherwise respond to reports by the community through social media of criminal activity.

Your malicious conduct has caused Ms. White real damage. As a direct result of your reporting of false and misleading information, Ms. White has lost her credibility and good reputation with the LAPD Command Staff, and with members of the community, so much so that the LAPD has since severed all official ties with Ms. White and her community groups as a whole – thus essentially abandoning the concerned citizens of the West Valley for fear of further misplaced public shaming by the likes of your reckless reporting. As such, you have maliciously caused Ms. White severe emotional distress and extreme damage to her reputation in the community and amongst her peers all so that you could fabricate a sensational headline maligning the LAPD. This is the epitome of yellow journalism.

Your reckless disregard for the truth has not only severely damaged the West Valley community as a whole, but has likewise directly damaged the careers and reputation of the Senior Lead Officers of the LAPD's Topanga Division. To be certain, by maliciously labeling Ms. White's groups as a criminal enterprise that targets certain vulnerable members of society, and then by misleadingly reporting that Los Angeles Police Officers were willing and knowing members of

Los Angeles Magazine, LLC
September 6, 2019
Page 5

such groups that actually perpetrate violence on the homeless, you have recklessly maligned these particular Topanga Division Police Officers and have irresponsibly caused them severe damage as well. You have subjected these Topanga Division Police Officers, who have done nothing wrong, to vicious personal attacks against them and their families by radical activists, and you have caused them to suffer negative professional scrutiny for merely doing their job.

Los Angeles Magazine's publishing of the subject article obviously harms our client's reputation and otherwise portrays her in a false light. By publishing these falsehoods, our client has been outrageously defamed. The grossly negligent publication of defamatory statements about her that are obviously harmful to her reputation provides a basis for substantial legal claims against Los Angeles Magazine, LLC, Zoie Matthew, and all others that assisted in the publication of the subject article.

Thus, on behalf of Ms. White, we hereby demand publication of a direct apology to Ms. White, to each Senior Lead Officer of Topanga Division, and to the innocent community members of Ms. White's community groups that are guilty of nothing more than doing their part to make their community a better place to live. We also hereby demand that you publish a retraction of your entire article to set the record straight, and that you cease and desist from the further dissemination of false and defamatory statements about Ms. White and those innocent people associated with her community groups. Failing strict compliance with the foregoing demands, our client fully intends to pursue all of her appropriate rights and remedies, including punitive damages.

All rights reserved.

Yours truly,

JACOBSON, RUSSELL, SALTZ, NASSIM & DE LA TORRE, LLP



Michael J. Saltz, Esq.

cc:
Fern White
Chief Michel Moore: 26689@lapd.online
Deputy Chief Jorge Rodriguez 25668@lapd.online
Captain Maureen Ryan: 25831@lapd.online
Captain Al Mendoza: 30905@lapd.online
Josh Rubenstein: N5373@lapd.online